Stay Determined: Teaching Empathy in an Apathetic World

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract
Currently in American society, political and social polarization is driven by the media and even the White House, causing apathy and misunderstanding among multiple groups of people. We now face a crucial point in our history to focus on building empathy in our society, and the best way to spark change is through our youth. Empathy is an integral component of education for all teachers and students, but it seems to be emphasized only in elementary classrooms. In actuality, secondary English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms are the ideal space for students to build and practice their empathy after learning the basics in elementary school. Empathy can be a complex concept for students to grasp, so teaching it through young adult literature allows students to step into a character's world and helps them understand other people's perspectives. Video games, though frequently criticized for their violence and lack of academic value, can also help students understand and practice empathy if they are implemented properly in a classroom. In this paper, I describe multiple educators' approaches to teaching empathy and implement some of their ideas into a unit centered on monsters, using Walter Dean Myers' young adult novel *Monster* and Toby Fox's role-playing video game *Undertale*.

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Process Analysis Statement

When I first started thinking of a topic for my Honors Thesis, I knew I wanted to focus on a problem related to the field of education. I initially wanted to interview educators who had quit their jobs and compile them into a documentary explaining why many teachers choose to leave the field. However, I soon learned that this would be an emotionally taxing topic and I was not invested enough to follow through. Fortunately, through discussions with my thesis advisor, Dr. Pamela Hartman, I was eventually able to choose a topic that I am passionate about: teaching empathy. Around this same time, I was enrolled in my Senior Seminar class, taught by Dr. Grouling-Snider, which focused on video game and board game storylines. I was familiar with the game *Undertale* but had not seen the educational value in it until taking this class. I knew that I wanted to design my own unit that implemented empathy-building activities using this game, but I needed to find some tried-and-true methods first.

Once I familiarized myself with some best practices for teaching empathy, I began designing my own unit. I chose the novel *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers to pair with *Undertale* because they both explore similar themes about monsters and the stereotypes associated with them. While designing my unit, I intentionally assigned collaborative work because students' ideas can be both challenged and supported while working with their peers. Students will be exposed to a variety of perspectives, which will challenge them to practice empathy by viewing texts through the eyes of others. I am still building upon my own best teaching practices, and writing this thesis helped me learn more about my own strengths and weaknesses. Implementing empathy into my classroom is one of my goals as an educator, and I hope to have the opportunity to teach the unit plan that I have designed for this project in an actual class one day.

Introduction

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, empathy is "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another" ("Empathy"). In other words, empathy is the ability to take someone else's perspective into account and understand them on a deeper level. It is important to note that empathy is also an action, rather than just a feeling. Empathy requires both an effort and a willingness to relate to and understand other people. Though two people will have different lived experiences and perspectives, they can still empathize with one another and find some kind of common ground. Unfortunately, this essential skill is less and less apparent in our current society, particularly within young people (C. Smith; Zaki).

In today's American society, fear and political polarization dominates our media, our conversations, and even our classrooms. The current President of the United States has verbally attacked a variety of minority groups, including women, people of color, and immigrants, leading his followers to take up racist and sexist sentiments (Niose). While these issues were present long before Donald Trump took office, his rhetoric has created a culture that promotes intolerance towards diversity. For example, the total number of bias-motivated hate crimes has increased significantly since Trump took office, from 5,850 in 2015 to 7,175 in 2017, with the rate staying consistent at 7,120 in 2018 (*FBI 2015*; *FBI 2017*; *FBI 2018*). Hate-crime violence also hit a 16-year high in 2019, with a noted increase of violence against Latinos (Hassan). Since the 2016 election, our society has grown more and more polarized as part of the nation stands by the president while others fight against him. However, it seems that members of both the Republican and Democratic party attack each other more directly rather than having productive conversations about their differences. This polarization is especially prevalent in our media.

One of the primary factors that influences peoples' perspectives of one another is the media, whether that be through news outlets or social media sites. In most cases, people are surrounded by their own opinions and find validation in them through the media they consume. They are selective about which news sources they watch, which social media accounts they follow, and a variety of other factors, which creates a sort of "echo chamber" that isolates them from others' opinions that do not align with their own (Grimes). In our inherently political society, it is important for individuals to have their own opinions on issues, but it is also imperative to consider others' perspectives as well. Sociologist and author Arlie Russell Hochschild, a Democrat, recently interviewed Trump supporters in Louisiana and discovered how empathy can play a crucial role in understanding others. She claims that empathy involves "people on different sides of the political divide learning to listen, and turning their own moral alarm system off, for a little while. They don't need to turn into somebody else. It's just listening, and getting smart about what you've learned" (J. Smith). Empathy involves listening to someone else's perspective and attempting to understand their point of view, not completely changing one's own personality to align with others'. However, seeking out others' opinions requires an effort that many people are unwilling to give.

Empathy is instilled in our nation's youth in hopes to create a more just and kind-hearted society. From a young age, Americans attend school and are taught the "Golden Rule:" treat others as you want to be treated. This is a lesson that both primary schools and parents endorse, providing young children with their first lesson in empathy. They are taught to think of how their words and actions impact other people by framing it through their own perspectives. As students continue on to elementary school, this lesson is reinforced through rewarding "good" behavior and punishing selfishness, aggression, and other undesirable traits. Empathy may seem like a

complex concept for elementary schoolers to grasp, but it is important that they begin practicing it at an early age. Students must learn how to interact with the people around them and to consider others' perspectives in order to successfully participate in our society.

There are current initiatives in place to help teach students empathy, most of which take place at the elementary level. To encourage and promote empathy throughout the world, some nonprofit groups are supporting other organizations that help students foster their own empathy. According to Stacey Kennelly, editorial assistant of Greater Good Magazine, the Ashoka Foundation awarded monetary prizes to many K-12 programs that foster "kindness and understanding" in their "Activating Empathy" competition (Kennelly). For example, they rewarded the organization, "No Bully," with one of two Judges' Awards. This organization encourages students to take small steps in their lives to be kind to the people around them and to step in when they see bullying occur. Lennon Flowers, "change manager" at Ashoka, argues, "In terms of where we are culturally and as a changing world, empathy is more essential today than it has been in any point in history" (Kennelly).

The organization also acknowledges that education goes beyond what happens in the classroom. Flowers continues, "What are we educating kids for? I would suggest it's probably not the ability to take tests for the rest of their lives, but rather the ability to work with others and collaborate effectively in the future" (Kennelly). While standardized testing plays a large role in determining what teachers and students do in classrooms, Kennelly argues that schools have the responsibility of preparing students to engage and collaborate with others. She further elaborates on this point, stating that "while teaching empathy in schools isn't a novel concept, the practice has been gaining attention in the wake of high-profile incidents of bullying and youth violence" (Kennelly). In other words, teaching empathy has been on educators' minds for quite some time,

but our current social climate demands that empathy be prioritized within schools. Many of the initiatives awarded by Ashoka targeted elementary-aged students specifically, but educators can play a large role in teaching students these skills even beyond the elementary level.

Schools have the responsibility to raise informed citizens, so we need to prepare students to engage in a world where people are different than they are. They must be taught how to communicate effectively with others who disagree with them rather than assuming that their opinions are the only ones that matter. School is one of the first places where most students interact with others who are different than themselves for prolonged periods of time. Thus, schools provide an environment for students to begin practicing empathy and building relationships outside of their families. Particularly in secondary school, students are expected to interact with others respectfully on their own without constant monitoring from teachers. While empathy should be reinforced within every classroom, English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms in particular give students the opportunity to practice empathy.

ELA classes provide an excellent environment for students to further develop their own empathy because they deal with texts that encompass a wide variety of perspectives. When reading texts with characters who are unlike them, students are taught to consider the events of the text from the perspectives of multiple characters. During class discussions, ELA teachers should encourage students to form their own opinions about texts but also to take their classmates' opinions into account as well. ELA classrooms also provide multiple opportunities for groupwork and other collaborative activities or projects that challenge students to work together and empathize with one another. Through the lens of literature, empathy can be discussed and implemented in a way that expands students' perspectives beyond their own communities.

Literature is beneficial for students and can help them become more empathetic (Zaki). However, literature is sometimes seen as a lesser genre because teachers think that concentrating on more informational texts will benefit their students more on standardized tests. However, literature provides a variety of benefits for students, including building their empathy skills. Janet Alsup, an English education researcher at Purdue University, found in a recent study that "exposure to fiction positively predicted performance on measures of social acumen, including empathy" (183). She argues that fiction introduces students to a variety of worlds and perspectives while encouraging readers to become invested in the characters' stories. Furthermore, Alsup found that "reading and engaging in close reading of Jane Austen's novels results in thinking as complex and rigorous as that associated with doing math problems or studying" (184). In other words, using literature does not only enhance students' empathy; it can improve their critical thinking skills. Teachers are encouraged to implement activities and assignments that challenge students to think critically and to engage in literature as a means of achieving this goal.

Review of Best Practices

As mentioned before, teaching empathy is not a new concept by any means, and other educators, specifically in the field of English Language Arts, have implemented effective strategies in their own classrooms. From my research I found two major points of consensus from educators: empathy can be promoted through the arts, from theater to creative writing (Ansbach; Gorrell; Orzulak), and teacher-centered approaches to empathy are imperative (Orzulak; Wender; Pytash). Overall, these researchers highlight the benefits of teaching empathy and encourage the pursuit of empathy within classrooms.

Many Language Arts educators and researchers have explored methods of promoting empathy through visual and language arts (Ansbach; Gorrell; Orzulak). The ELA classroom is the ideal educational environment for fostering students' empathy because they are exposed to multiple texts from a wide variety of perspectives. ELA educators can also use the visual arts to promote empathy in their classrooms by implementing theater exercises. These educators have implemented different strategies in order to drive their students towards empathy, and all three were successful.

For example, Jennifer Ansbach, a National Board Certified teacher, taught a nonfiction novel featuring first-person essays about bullying in her classroom and asked students to respond by rewriting narratives from the perspective of the victim, the bully, or a bystander from the novel. She cites empathy as "one of the factors associated with decreased bullying and increased student intervention" (88), both of which were goals within her classroom. She also notes the difference between cognitive empathy, "the ability to understand or identify what someone else is feeling," and affective empathy, "the direct experience of unpleasant feelings or distress on seeing another's circumstance" (88). Ansbach found that her students' affective empathy was increased through reading first-person essays (89). In other words, her students related to the characters in the novel and felt their pain, which is an indicator of empathy. She asked her students to rewrite the stories as letters which were made into posters that hung in the hallways for other students to see. This created a more intimate environment and helped students identify their purpose for writing as well as their audience (91). Though Ansbach used nonfiction rather than fiction, students were still exposed to literature that bolstered their empathy and they were encouraged to take on the characters' perspectives through writing the letters.

Nancy Gorrell, an educator and researcher, also emphasizes writing in her classroom. She utilizes ekphrastic poetry, which she defines as "poetic responses to great works of art" that "[require] the viewer/poet to 'enter into' the spirit and feeling of the subject through a variety of poetic stances: describing, noting, reflecting, or addressing" (32). She introduces this genre to her students by showing them an image of a young Polish boy during the Holocaust coupled with an ekphrastic poem that responds to the photo. After showing students this example, she asks them to write their own poems to or from the perspective of anyone in the photo. Once students have written and fully revised their poems, Gorrell explains the significance of ekphrastic poetry. She claims, "I point out that, in that 'speaking,' the poet 'enters into the spirit and feeling of others.' I define that 'entering' as empathy" (38). Gorrell utilizes ekphrastic poetry to challenge students by considering others' perspectives and "stepping into" a new point of view. In her classroom, students are practicing empathy as well as developing their creative writing skills. The social skills required for empathy pair well with collaborative writing activities, which provide students with the opportunity to develop their social as well as their composition skills.

Melinda McBee Orzulak, former high school teacher and current Associate Professor and Coordinator of English Education at Bradley University, uses these skills within her own classroom and advocates for the utilization of theater exercises in tandem with writing. One such activity that she emphasizes is called "Line by Line," in which students take segments of free-writes and combine them together to make a collaborative poem that they perform by standing in a line and reciting their individual parts (82). This pushes students to critique their own work and their classmates' to determine which sections fit together and which should be left out. Through this activity, they can see their classmates' perspectives and collaborate with each other to reach a consensus or common understanding.

Orzulak also discusses the importance of using empathy in professional development for practicing teachers. For example, she recounts a game of "Pass the Clap" with other teachers after a professional development session: "A five-minute activity took our group from a hotbed of frustration to a circle of laughing participants" (81). The game requires participants to stand in a circle, to face the person next to them and to clap at the same time. The clapping then continues throughout the circle (80). Orzulak explains that this game and similar activities "come from team-building activities and can be used as a way to clear teachers' heads" (81), which can be helpful during lengthy professional development sessions where teachers may become bored or frustrated. She states that these "breather" activities can be useful for teachers and students alike and claims that "empathy is also at the heart of good teaching and leadership" (81). She further explains the importance of teachers learning to implement empathy because "weaving empathy into a lesson is particularly important when teaching complex topics" (82). ELA classrooms provide students with a space to discuss diverse texts, but these texts also challenge students to think about and discuss potentially controversial issues. Teachers should be prepared to discuss these texts with their students, and Orzulak agrees. She cites Robin Chaplik, who created an immersive professional development workshop with teachers that implemented theater games to encourage teamwork and empathy. Chaplik states, "The arts can help teachers explore potentially volatile topics with their students in a free yet safe environment'" (82). By learning to integrate a variety of theater exercises and writing strategies within their classrooms, ELA teachers can effectively introduce and discuss complex issues with their students.

While it is important for students to practice empathy, it is just as important for educators to do so as well. In order to create environments that promote empathy, teachers must model it themselves. Some educators and researchers have studied methods that teachers can utilize to

build upon their own empathy (Wender; Pytash). For instance, Emily Wender, former secondary teacher and current professor of English Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, suggests checking in with students through informal letters. She uses writing prompts such as "Tell me how class is going for you" and "Take the next few minutes to write me a note about what's feeling difficult and what's feeling like it's going well" to see how they were feeling personally and academically (36). By doing this, Wender clearly shows her concern for her students' well-being and provides them with an outlet to express themselves. It is imperative that ELA educators ask students to share their own stories so they can learn more about them and improve their teaching to fit students' needs more effectively. Wender's journaling strategy can be used in tandem with young adult literature to provide students with opportunities to both share their own stories and listen to each other's.

In another study, Kristine Pytash, assistant professor in Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies at College of Education, Health and Human Services at Kent State University, found that sharing stories is a crucial component of the ELA classroom. She also found that it is important for students and teachers alike to read literature that exposes them to a wide variety of perspectives. Young adult literature is typically seen as most beneficial to students, but Pytash claims that this genre can also help preservice teachers (PSTs) cope with student bullying and suicide. Pytash explains, "By reading young adult literature, PSTs had the opportunity to reflect, gain insight, and develop introspective and empathetic points of view concerning their future students" (476). This genre encourages teachers at all levels to consider both the needs of adolescents and what their students may be going through outside of the classroom. Young adult literature pushes students and teachers alike to empathize with the characters, which may propel them into more empathetic interactions with others. Reading

literature is essential in an ELA class and discussing the text allows for even deeper consideration and exploration. Through the process of class discussions, students can create a dialogue between themselves, each other, and the author, which can help them take on a more empathetic perspective. Being open to others' opinions is a step towards empathy, so students should have multiple opportunities to discuss texts in the classroom.

At the same time, there are some concerns regarding empathy that must be addressed. Ann Jurecic, English professor and author of "Empathy and the Critic," challenges the idea that reading literature alone causes people to become more empathetic. Empathy is certainly an important skill for students and educators alike to have, but it alone may not be enough to create real change. Jurecic argues that reading literature is worthwhile for its own sake, but that simply exposing students to stories about others will not automatically cause them to make more empathetic choices. She cites Barack Obama's 2007 "empathy deficit" speech in which he claimed that "the great power of books is the capacity to take you out of yourself and put you somewhere else...it's books more than anything else that are going to give our young people the ability to see other people. And that then gives them the capacity to act responsibly with respect to other people" (13-14). While many educators have agreed with Obama, Jurecic argues, "Just because books *can* do this doesn't mean that they, 'more than anything else,' *will* teach young people to feel or act a certain way" (14). In other words, students can read multiple works of literature from a wide variety of perspectives, but if they choose not to act with empathy towards others, reading the literature itself made little to no difference in the student's life.

Jurecic also differentiates between literature that sparks empathy and sentimental literature. She discusses *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, an example of sentimental literature, which "creates the illusion that identification with a person who suffers allows one, through feeling, to transcend

structural problems such as racism and sexism," but clarifies that "witnessing and identifying with pain, consuming and deriving pleasure and moral self-satisfaction does not change the world" (17). She argues that reading literature about the experiences of less fortunate people does not innately make people more empathetic, nor does it change people's actions. She still believes, however, that empathy can be taught through literature if an educator is intentional about what texts they use and how they use them. For example, she argues that Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* can effectively encourage empathy in readers. She distinguishes *Beloved* as separate from sentimental literature and describes the novel as "a continuing cultural conversation about empathy" and "an exploration of empathy's possibility and necessity, as well as its limits" (18).

She further explains that the novel provides a variety of perspectives from multiple characters over the same story rather than "privileging any single character's perspective" (19). She claims that "Morrison lets readers gradually assemble an understanding of the conditions under which a mother might make the choice to kill her child" and that this "exercise of empathy" is more "thoughtful, respectful, slow, and aware of distance and constraints" than "the empathy that many readers and English educators assume is naturally engendered by literature." Jurecic continues, "Morrison suggests that making the effort to understand is a necessary commitment, even in impossibly complex circumstances," but that it is a different kind of empathy that leads to contemplation rather than action (19). This is to say that Morrison slowly attempts to spark empathy in readers by providing different vignettes of human experiences in her novel rather than assuming that readers will automatically be more empathetic just from reading it. Jurecic finds this approach more beneficial because it requires readers to be more intentional in their thoughts towards the novel and its characters rather than just feeling entirely

invested or disgusted. Jurecic seems to suggest that reading literature itself will not make students more empathetic to the point of action, but that a teacher's intentional and mindful selection of texts can cause students to contemplate and even attempt to understand others' experiences.

Jurecic also gives the example of the memoir of Lucy Grealy, a cancer patient who wrote an autobiography documenting her experiences. She compares Grealy's and Morrison's works and makes a case for why these types of literature are important:

> The novel and memoir both suggest that the lived complexity of empathy cannot be reduced to an outcome to be assessed, a feeling to be argued out of, or a neurological response. For these writers, empathy is instead an inexhaustible subject for the practices of contemplation, exploration, and creation. Literature matters, their work suggests, not because it changes our brains, hearts, souls, or political convictions, but because the practice of reading literature slows thought down. In a hurried age, and with the constant distractions provided by instantly available entertainment, a book provides a rare opportunity for sustained focus, contemplation, and introspection. Literary critics and educators can encourage readers to take advantage of the invitation to dwell in uncertainty and to explore the difficulties of knowing, acknowledging, and responding to others. In the end, however, it's the reader's choice. (Jurecic 24)

Jurecic's main argument is that literature is important because it provides readers with the opportunity to engage with complex ideas and dilemmas, but students may choose to read a text at face value and reject any further engagement with it. She further argues, "Students are more likely to develop these traits if such behavior is a visible and pervasive practice in the institutions where they learn and work" (24). Teachers, therefore, can play a key role in promoting empathy

in their classrooms by modeling empathetic behavior. If educators are intentional not only about the texts they choose to read with students, but also in their interactions with students, they have a greater chance of seeing their own behavior replicated in the classroom. In terms of teaching empathy, what the teacher asks students to *do* with the text is more important than the text itself. Asking students to contemplate, explore, and create will likely make the text more meaningful than only asking them to read it. Jurecic's claim that empathy is not an automatic byproduct of reading is important to keep in mind, but it does not mean that empathy should be discouraged in classrooms. The most effective methods of teaching empathy, in my opinion, require engagement with diverse texts as well as a respectful classroom environment that the teacher creates and reinforces through their own behavior.

Personal Implementation

To implement empathy within my own classroom, I plan on pairing the young adult novel *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers with the narrative-heavy role-playing game (RPG) *Undertale* because they explore similar themes, particularly the experiences of monsters and our misconceptions of them. In our society, monsters, whether fictional or real, are seen as apathetic and undeserving of empathy. Both of these texts challenge that ideology and encourage the reader/player to empathize with the monster by portraying them as complex and compassionate characters. Students will be able to call their personal views of monsters into question and discuss their ideas with their peers. Video games are typically seen by the general public as a detriment to education, but myriad research has proven otherwise. Educators can properly implement video games into their classroom to engage reluctant readers while providing all students with a multimodal environment.

Through my research, I found three examples of teachers using video games in their classrooms, all of which were very successful. The first of which, Constance Steinkuehler, informatics professor, makes a case for video games because they can help students gain or improve upon their digital literacy skills. She writes, "Unlike television, books, or any other media that came before them, video games are about a back and forth between reading the game's meanings and writing back into them. In effect, games are narrative spaces that the player inscribes with his or her own intent" (61). In other words, students read the actual text in the game and participate within its world while making their own decisions within that world, or "writing back into" it. Games as "narrative spaces" makes them beneficial tools to use specifically within ELA classrooms because they expose students to a different form of narrative and allow them to create their own narrative within a digital world that typically has little restrictions. Video games can help reluctant readers become more engaged in the classroom because they can explore narratives in a format that may be more familiar to them, so they may be more comfortable with playing a game than reading or writing because they were more successful with the former.

According to reading teacher Megan Glover Adams, reluctant readers may also be more receptive to video games in the classroom because they "need an escape from their daily life in school" (Adams 57). She uses a role-playing game as a tutoring tool in her classroom by pairing strong readers with reluctant readers and allowing them to work through the game together. She writes, "The students have the opportunity to read aloud collaboratively while interacting with the game itself; thus, reluctant readers also have the opportunity to become experts in the game. When working with a classmate, the stronger reader acts as the 'model' for interpretation and guidance, but ultimately, both students learn a great deal from the experience" (56). This

mentoring relationship allows apprehensive readers to become more confident in their abilities and encourages collaboration between students of different skill levels. Adams also argues that "children in today's society have grown up in a textually rich environment, but their canvas is not the same as the generations before them" (57). She makes the case that social media, the Internet, and video games provide students with a wide variety of texts at their disposal. While these texts are regarded with little value, they still help students build upon their literacy skills. Adams also argues that video games in particular can help students become more engaged in the text. She states, "By taking on actual characters, they are acting out the story themselves, which is a literacy skill that we often have little time for" (59). Students need to be given opportunities to immerse themselves fully in the world of a text, and video games allow them to personally play a role within that world.

As students are immersed in the world of the game, they can learn much about the digital world as well as the world around them. Catherine Beavis, professor of education in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University in Australia, studied a classroom in which a male teacher at an all-male Catholic school played a game in front of his students using a projector. Students would shout instructions to their teacher and work through the game as a group (433). The teacher then asked students to design their own video games "based on 'making positive moral choices,'" which aligned with the school's religious education curriculum (434, 437).

The goal of this assignment also aligns with the goal of *Undertale*: to persuade the player to make positive, empathetic choices in their interactions with the virtual world. Video games are frequently criticized for their violent imagery and themes, but they can also be used as a force for good. Beavis further argues that "there are many reasons for bringing popular culture into the

classroom, including the opportunity to tap into the evident pleasure and active engagement often entailed, the ability to build bridges between students' in-and out-of-school lives, and the rich complexity of much popular culture" (434). Perhaps the most important of these benefits is drawing the connection between students' lives inside and outside of school because it creates a more authentic experience for students and helps them become more engaged as well. Similar to Adams' argument, Beavis also claims that students read a variety of texts every day, whether online or through print, that they can use for academic as well as social purposes (434). Academic texts need not be constrained to traditional textbooks and literature, nor should they be. Creating a multimodal classroom with a variety of texts can help students become, and stay, engaged. As an educator, I plan to implement multiple types of text into my classroom to keep students interested and allow them to express their understanding in a variety of ways.

Using video games as educational tools is a concept that first interested me when I took my Senior Seminar class for the English department, which focused on narratives in both video and board games. In this class, I wrote a game analysis for *Undertale* and discussed its three diverging storylines (Ellison). By playing the game myself, I was able to experience the feelings of both guilt and excitement that the game's creator intended his players to feel.

Toby Fox's *Undertale* and its three diverging storylines offer many opportunities for students to interact with an online narrative. It is set in a fictional world where humans and monsters once coexisted, but after a war between the two, the monsters were banished to the "Underground." The story begins with Frisk, a human who falls into the Underground and must find a way back to the human world. There are three ways to go about navigating the monster world: the "True" or Pacifist route, where every creature is spared; the Neutral route, where some monsters die and others are spared; and the Genocide route, where every single creature is

slaughtered. While these options make the game sound incredibly violent, it is designed in 8-bit format, so the deaths are not graphic. During the Genocide route, there is only a small amount of blood shown after defeating one of the bosses. The route the player chooses drastically changes the narrative and the ending of the game, even through multiple playthroughs. Since I had prior knowledge of the Pacifist and Genocide routes, I decided to try my hand at the Neutral route to see what differences occurred in the game.

When discussing the different routes of *Undertale*, it is important to bring in the creator's perspective. Toby Fox, the mind behind the game, proposed his idea on Kickstarter, where it received endless support. He dreamed up the game as a retaliation to the heavy focus of the "violence and increasing character statistics as the standard game mechanic in RPGs" (Müller 9). He wanted to develop a game with a more positive message, featuring "non-violent ways of dealing with conflicts" and gameplay "that teach[es] people how to be friendlier" (9). His $5,000 crowdfunding goal was blown out of the water tenfold (Müller 9), proving that people had an interest in the game and desired to see it come to life. Because of Fox's intentions in making the game, the Pacifist route is seen as the "True" route to follow, but the player has the agency to follow that path or to ravage the Underground, but not without consequences. *Undertale* focuses heavily on non-violent conflict resolution, character development, and morality, which the player can only fully achieve by playing the Pacifist route. Because of this, the game motivates the player to pursue this option and rewards peaceful actions.

Whenever the player dies, regardless of which route they take, a screen pops up that says "game over" with the following text underneath: "You cannot give up just yet…[character name]! Stay determined...." "Determination" serves as a driving force within the game and phrases, such as "You are filled with determination," occur at every checkpoint (Fox). Players

are motivated to press on throughout the challenges that the game presents, which mirrors the determination that students need in order to be successful in school. Though reluctant readers may lack this perseverance, implementing a video game in the ELA classroom can increase their interest. If students are invested in the content they are learning and are confident in their abilities, they are more likely to persist through challenges. Determination requires a willingness to commit to a task even through adversity, and the game makes this clear.

Undertale's diverse narrative tracts allow the player to either befriend all the monsters and become a hero or destroy them all and even the world as a whole. Since Toby Fox designed the game with pacifism in mind, it only makes sense that the Pacifist route is considered to be the "True" ending for the game. Even while playing the small segment of the Neutral route, I felt guilty for killing the few monsters that I did, especially knowing that I could not undo what I had done. The game holds players accountable for their actions, which is important for students to keep in mind when interacting with minor characters and bosses alike. Every action matters, so players are forced to look inside themselves and decide both what kind of person/player they want to be and what story they want to see unfold while playing the game.

This game pairs well with the young adult novel *Monster* because they both explore issues of identity and ask readers/players to reconsider their views of monsters. In the novel, Steve Harmon, a 16-year-old black teen, is on trial for murder and imprisoned for the duration of the trial. He writes journal entries about the fear and hopelessness he faces in prison and then writes about the details of the trial in the format of a movie script. Early on in the novel, the prosecuting attorney refers to Steve as a "monster," leading him to grapple with his identity throughout the trial and even after he is found not guilty. This novel can spark discussions of race, prejudice, stereotypes, and various other topics. *Undertale* also contains a nonbinary

protagonist and an LGBTQ+ couple, which provides students with diverse perspectives and may challenge negative preconceived notions of the LGBTQ+ community. The game also poses many moral issues, so students will be able to compare and contrast it with the novel while exploring the issues that both texts pose.

Monster and *Undertale* pair well together as excellent choices for teaching empathy. The novel is of high interest because it shows readers the harsh realities of prison and the intricacies of the justice system through an adolescent's eyes. Since the novel also alternates between journal entries and script format, it is fairly quick to read, which could further encourage reluctant readers to press on. *Undertale* is also a high-interest text because it introduces players to an unfamiliar, whimsical world. It also provides players with options and agency, and the players' choices matter. The novel and the game both challenge students to question or reconsider their current views of monsters and show kindness and empathy towards them.

I would teach these two texts in a four-week unit for a ninth-grade general ELA class. In order to play the game, each student would need a computer, so I would ideally teach this in a one-to-one school or utilize the school's computer lab, if available. Since the game takes anywhere from six to twelve hours to play depending on the route, I am planning for 60-minute class periods, though I could adjust the timeline of the unit if I taught it in a school with shorter periods. Students would alternate between playing the game and reading in class, with many days in the unit explicitly dedicated to reading and gaming time. I will assign roughly 60-80 pages of the novel per week, so in order to be successful in this unit, students may also need to read outside of class.

While it may seem counterproductive that students would spend more time playing the game than reading in class, this would be more beneficial for most students since they would not

have to purchase the game themselves or have a computer or internet access at home. I was inspired to use this model after attending a presentation on using video games alongside literature in the classroom at the National Council of Teachers of English conference in Baltimore, Maryland in November 2019 (Henry and Radice). The presenters had their sixth-grade students play the game *Moonbase Alpha* on Mondays and Fridays and read the novel *Space Case* on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Since Henry and Radice were working with younger students and focused on those two texts for most of the semester, I have adjusted their model to better fit my purposes.

As my students would play *Undertale* in class, they would write journal entries documenting their emotions and thoughts regarding the game. Depending on the route they choose, students would likely write about their positive encounters with characters or the negative consequences of their actions within the game. Much like Emily Wender used journals to "check in" with her students, I would be able to use my students' journals to keep them accountable for some kind of writing as they play as well as see how they are feeling while playing the game. Throughout this unit, we would primarily be discussing monsters and our societal perceptions of them, but empathy lies at the unit's core. By painting monsters in a different light and challenging students to rethink their preconceived notions of them, the unit encourages students to be more empathetic and to think critically before judging an individual. The novel also centers around a black character in prison, so it would expose my students to racial and situational perspectives they may not be familiar with. *Undertale* also features LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming characters, so students could also see these perspectives through playing the game.

Students would also practice empathy with whole-class and small-group discussions throughout the unit and particularly while working on their final project. As a summative assessment at the end of the four weeks, students would be placed into groups based on ability level, with at least one high-achieving and low-achieving student per group. They would be tasked with creating a PSA about monsters that answers the questions, "What should people know about monsters?" and "How can we encourage people to show empathy towards monsters?" Students will be graded on their usage of logos, pathos, and ethos along with their usage of at least one of the central texts. This project connects the ideas explored in both *Monster* and *Undertale* and encourages students to take a more empathetic perspective towards the characters in both works as well as their group members.

My unit uses strategies that require students to hear others' perspectives, but as Jurecic noted earlier, this does not guarantee that students will listen or become more empathetic. Reading about another person's experiences does not automatically cause students to feel empathy towards that person, and I acknowledge this. However, by implementing *Undertale* in my unit, I will give students the opportunity to take on another person's perspective and to interact with characters in a more direct way than they would by reading about them. While some more traditional novels may dissuade students from engaging with the characters, *Monster*'s usage of Steve's personal journal entries shows students what he is thinking directly in an intimate way. Since students know that they are reading Steve's personal journal, they may feel a connection to the character because they are being trusted with his thoughts and secrets. Students may or may not become more empathetic after engaging with both of these texts, but they will still have listened to someone else's story, which is a step towards empathy.

Teaching empathy is imperative, especially in today's apathetic world. Students must learn how to interact with each other respectfully, consider others' opinions, and challenge their own views. Young adult literature is an accessible genre for students to explore these issues, and video games can help create further interest and exploration. *Monster* and *Undertale* are complex and thought-provoking on their own, but together they provide multiple perspectives on society's view of monsters and how they are typically more complex than they initially seem. Students would benefit from reading these texts in tandem while discussing issues of humanity and empathy. Ideally, at the end of this unit, students will be more empathetic and kinder in their thoughts and actions. Even if they do not make it to that point, they will still be exposed to others' viewpoints that they may not have considered before. Whether or not students agree with their peers or can fully see the world from another's perspective, it is still important for them to be aware of others' stories and opinions. For educators and students alike, it may be hard to stay determined in our world today, but the pursuit of empathy will always be worthwhile.

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Appendix I: Unit Outline and Explanations

"The Monsters Among Us" Unit Plan Outline

Essential Questions

- What is a monster?
- Are monsters inherently bad?
- Can monsters have empathy? Should we show empathy towards them?

Standards Covered

9-10.RL.2.2 Analyze in detail the development of two or more themes or central ideas over the course of a work of literature, including how they emerge and are shaped and refined by specific details.

9-10.RL.3.1 Analyze and evaluate how an author's choices concerning how to structure a work of literature, order events within it (e.g., parallel episodes), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

9-10.SL.2.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) on grade-appropriate topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing personal ideas clearly and persuasively.

9-10.SL.4.2 Create engaging presentations that make strategic and creative use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) to add interest and enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence.

9-10.ML.1 Critically analyze information found in electronic, print, and mass media used to inform, persuade, entertain, and transmit culture.

Texts Used

- *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers
- *Undertale* by Toby Fox

Plan for Assessment

Formative: Students will be assessed on their journal entries while playing *Undertale* as well as weekly reading quizzes that coincide with *Monster*.

Summative: Students will be placed in groups and create a Public Service Announcement focused on challenging the definition of "monster" and providing examples from either the game or the novel. This final project will be assigned **after** week 4 once students finish both the novel and the game.

Schedule

Week 1

Chapters assigned: "Monday, July 6th" (pg. 1-43) and "Tuesday, July 7th" (pg. 45-58)

Day 1: Introduction to unit

1. Class brainstorming: Write the word "monster" on the board and ask students to explain everything they know about it.
2. Class discussion: Can a "monster" have empathy? (bring in examples like *Monsters, Inc*., *Shrek*, *Sesame Street*)
3. Introduce the novel: Give a brief synopsis of the storyline and the structure.

Day 2: Start *Monster*

1. Pass out unit outline (see pg. 33)
2. Class discussion
    a. Explain the book's format in that it switches between a personal journal and a movie script.
    b. Read the quote from Petrocelli on page 21: "...there are also monsters in our communities–people who are willing to steal and to kill, people who disregard the rights of others."
    c. Ask students: Is this what you typically think of when you hear the word "monster"? Do you think Steve will fit this description?
3. If the discussion finishes early, give the students independent reading time.

Day 3: Start *Undertale*

1. Show the game trailer
2. Explain the three routes (Pacifist, Neutral, and Genocide)
3. Explain journaling guidelines (see pg. 35)
4. Students choose their route and start playing

Day 4: Independent reading day

Day 5: Gaming day

Homework: Finish reading

Week 2

Chapters assigned: "Wednesday, July 8th" (pg. 59-88); "Thursday, July 9th" (pg. 89-126); and "Friday, July 10th" (pg. 127-136)

Day 6: Lyric Analysis #1: "Monster" by Imagine Dragons and "Monster" by Skillet (see pg. 36)

1. Ask students to get into small groups of 3-4 to complete the activity. Each group is either assigned the Imagine Dragons song or the Skillet song.
    a. As a group, students will listen to their assigned song. Then two students will highlight the rhetorical questions and personification in the song. The other 1-2 students will try to decipher what the figurative language means and answer the questions.

        i. Yellow – Rhetorical question
            1. Why is the speaker asking rhetorical questions? Do some of the questions actually have answers? Why or why not?
        ii. Pink – Personification
            1. How does the speaker personify the "monster?" Does the speaker distance himself from the "monster," claim that he is one, or both?
2. Once students finish annotating their assigned song, they will pair up with a group that had the other song. Each group will share their findings with the other group and together they will answer the following questions:
    a. What similarities are there between the two songs? What differences did you find?
    b. What are the songs saying about monsters?
    c. Do you feel bad for either of the speakers?
    d. Have you ever felt like a "monster?"
3. Bring the groups together for a whole-class discussion of each group's findings.
4. If there is time left over after the discussion, ask students to continue reading independently.

Day 7: Independent reading day

Day 8: Gaming day

Day 9: "Line by Line" Poems (*adapted from Melinda McBee Orzulak*)

1. Ask a student to read pages 95-96 aloud, from "While we were waiting" up to "look in here."
2. Tell students that they will have 5 minutes for a free-writing activity. Ask them to write about the relationship between monsters and fear. To help get them started, ask, "Do monsters always cause fear? Are you or were you ever afraid of monsters? Can monsters be afraid?"
3. Once the five minutes pass, place students in groups of 3-4 based on ability, with at least one high-achieving and one low-achieving student per group. Ask each student to read their free writing aloud to their group. Then each group will choose lines from each individual's free writing and combine them into a cohesive poem. Each group's poem must be at least 12 lines long, using at least two lines out of each student's free writing. Students will have 30-40 minutes to complete this activity.
4. Each group will present their poem to the rest of the class, with each student reciting their individual parts.
5. If all of the groups finish presenting early, ask students to continue reading the novel for the remainder of the period.

Day 10: Gaming day & journal check-ins
Homework: Finish reading assigned chapters

Week 3

Chapters assigned: "Saturday, July 11th" (pg. 137-151); "Sunday, July 12th" (pg. 153-159); and "Monday, July 13th" (pg. 161-200)

Day 11: Lyric Analysis #2: "Imagine" by John Lennon and "Where Is The Love?" by The Black Eyed Peas (see pg. 40)

1. Pass out copies of the lyrics to both "Imagine" and "Where Is The Love?"
2. Play "Imagine" out loud for the whole class.
    a. Students should take notes individually as the song is playing, writing down any thoughts or questions they have. After the song is over, they will have five minutes to finish writing and respond to the following questions:
        i. John Lennon asks us to imagine a world without heaven, countries, religion, or possessions. How could each of these be helpful to some people? How could each of these be harmful to others?
        ii. What is the song saying about society as a whole?
        iii. How does the song convey a message of empathy? Find some specific examples in the lyrics.
3. Play "Where Is The Love?" out loud for the whole class.
    a. Students follow the same procedure as before, but have ten minutes to finish writing this time. They should respond to the following questions:
        i. The Black Eyed Peas blame the CIA, gangs, the media, etc. for violence in the USA. Why do you think they did this? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your reasoning.
        ii. What is the song saying about society as a whole?
        iii. How does the song convey a message of empathy? Find some specific examples in the lyrics.
4. Once students are finished writing, we will come together as a class to discuss students' findings for both songs. Pose these questions to prompt further discussion:
    a. These songs are 32 years apart and are different genres, but share a similar message. Can you think of any recent examples of songs with the same message? What does that say about our society today? What does this show us about the power of music?
    b. If you could pick *one* of these songs to use in the soundtrack for a movie adaptation of *Monster*, which would you choose and why? What about *Undertale*?
5. If the discussion finishes early, ask students to continue reading the novel for the remainder of the period.

Day 12: Independent reading day

Day 13: Gaming day

Day 14: Ekphrastic Poetry (*adapted from Nancy Gorrell*)

1. Ask students to explain the phrase "A picture is worth a thousand words." Ask students to describe any photos or images they have seen that have made an impact on their lives somehow.
2. Explain that ekphrastic poetry involves responding to an image or a work of art with written words. Ask students if they have any questions and answer any that arise.
3. Pass out the Ekphrastic Poetry handout (see pg. 43). Directions are listed below. Students will have the remainder of the period to finish this activity.
    a. Look at the photo below from the graphic novel adaptation of *Monster*. Based on the picture and what we've read so far, write a poem to Steve using one of the following perspectives:
        i. Write to Steve from your own perspective. Do you think he's innocent and want to support him? Do you think he's guilty and should confess? Basically, what do you want Steve to know or tell you after reading your poem?
        ii. Write to Steve from the perspective of another character in the novel. How has this character acted towards Steve so far? Do they think that Steve is guilty or innocent? Is there anything they would want to tell Steve that they haven't had the chance to say?
4. If any students finish early, ask them to continue reading the novel.

Day 15: Gaming day & journal check-ins
Homework: Finish reading assigned chapters

Week 4
Chapters assigned: "Tuesday, July 14th" (pg. 201-267); "Friday afternoon, July 17th" (pg. 269-277); and "December, 5 months later" (pg. 279-281)

Day 16: Gaming day

Day 17: Small group discussion

1. Split students up into groups of 3-4, with at least one high-achieving and one low-achieving student per group.
2. Ask students to look at the pictures on pages 220-221 with the captions, "What was I doing? What was I thinking?"
3. Ask students: What do these say about Steve? Do you think he's guilty or innocent?
4. Bring the groups together for a whole-class discussion of each group's findings.
5. If any students finish early, ask them to continue reading the novel.

Day 18: Gaming day
Homework: Finish reading the novel

Day 19: Final novel day

1. Class discussion
    a. Tell students to flip to page 276 in the novel. Explain that Steve receives a not guilty verdict, but O'Brien acts cold towards him. Ask students: What do you make of this?
    b. Ask students to turn to page 281, where the last line of the book asks, "What did she see?" Ask students: Do you think O'Brien saw Steve as a criminal? A monster?
    c. Ask students if they have changed their mind about Steve throughout the course of the novel. Ask students how they feel about monsters and if this has changed at all prior to reading the novel.

Day 20: Finish *Undertale* & last journal check-ins

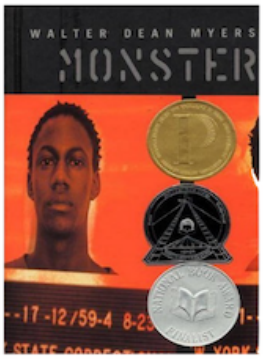
Week 5

Introduce final project and pass out guidelines (see pg. 44)

Appendix II: Student Handouts

THE MONSTERS AMONG US
UNIT OUTLINE

Central Texts



Monster by Walter Dean Myers

Undertale by Toby Fox

Essential Questions

- What is a monster?
- Are monsters inherently bad?
- Can monsters have empathy? Should we show empathy towards them?

Schedule

Week 1

Chapters assigned: "Monday, July 6th" (pg. 1-43) and "Tuesday, July 7th" (pg. 45-58)

Day 1: Introduction to Unit
Day 2: Start *Monster*
Day 3: Start *Undertale*
Day 4: Independent reading day
Day 5: Gaming day

Schedule (cont.)

Week 2

Chapters assigned: "Wednesday, July 8th" (pg. 59-88); "Thursday, July 9th" (pg. 89-126); and "Friday, July 10th" (pg. 127-136)

Day 6: Lyric Analysis #1
Day 7: Independent reading day
Day 8: Gaming day
Day 9: "Line by Line" Poems
Day 10: Gaming day & journal check-ins

Week 3

Chapters assigned: "Saturday, July 11th" (pg. 137-151); "Sunday, July 12th" (pg. 153-159); and "Monday, July 13th" (pg. 161-200)

Day 11: Lyric Analysis #2
Day 12: Independent reading day
Day 13: Gaming day
Day 14: Ekphrastic Poetry
Day 15: Gaming day & journal check-ins

Week 4

Chapters assigned: "Tuesday, July 14th" (pg. 201-267); "Friday afternoon, July 17th" (pg. 269-277); and "December, 5 months later" (pg. 279-281)

Day 16: Gaming day
Day 17: Small group discussion & reading day
Day 18: Gaming day
Day 19: Final novel day & class discussion
Day 20: Finish *Undertale* & last journal check-ins

UNDERTALE

JOURNALING GUIDELINES

Over the next four weeks, we will be playing the video game *Undertale* in class. As you play the game, you are expected to keep a journal to record your thoughts and reactions. You must write **at least one paragraph every time you play.** Since we have set aside nine full class days to play the game, you should have a **minimum of nine entries.**

There are a variety of ways to write your journal entries, so choose one of the following for each day. You must try **all three** of these perspectives in your journal entries:

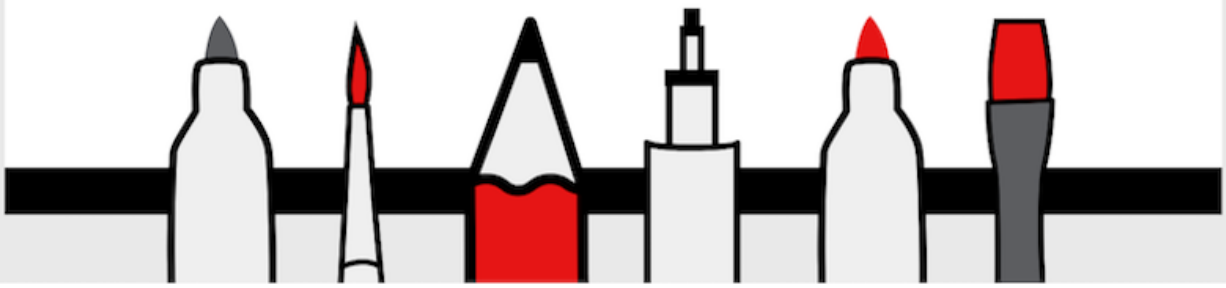
1. **Write in first-person point of view and record your thoughts through your own personal perspective.**
   ("I did this in the game, and I felt...")

2. **Write in first-person point of view from your character's perspective, immersing yourself in the world of the game.**
   ("I did this today, and I felt...")

3. **Write in first-person point of view from other characters in the game interacting with your character.**
   For example, if you were to write from Toriel's perspective, you could say, "[Your character's name] decided to leave today, even after I warned them about Asgore..."

This assignment is worth **100 points overall.**

- Each required entry = 10 points (90 points total)
- Each additional perspective = 5 points (10 points total)



Lyric Analysis Activity #1

Part 1: Work in groups of 3-4 to complete this activity. Listen to the song and follow along with the lyrics once as a group, then reread the lyrics, highlight the figurative language, and answer the questions.

- Yellow – Rhetorical question
    - Why is the speaker asking rhetorical questions? Do some of the questions actually have answers? Why or why not?
- Pink – Personification
    - How does the speaker personify the "monster?" Does the speaker distance himself from the "monster," claim that he is one, or both?

"Monster" by Imagine Dragons

Ever since I could remember
Everything inside of me
Just wanted to fit in (oh oh oh oh)
I was never one for pretenders
Everything I tried to be
Just wouldn't settle in (oh oh oh oh)

If I told you what I was
Would you turn your back on me?
And if I seem dangerous
Would you be scared?
I get the feeling just because
Everything I touch isn't dark enough
If this problem lies in me

I'm only a man with a candle to guide me
I'm taking a stand to escape what's inside me
A monster, a monster
I've turned into a monster
A monster, a monster
And it keeps getting stronger

Can I clear my conscience
If I'm different from the rest
Do I have to run and hide? (oh oh oh oh)
I never said that I want this
This burden came to me
And it's made its home inside (oh oh oh oh)

If I told you what I was
Would you turn your back on me?
And if I seem dangerous
Would you be scared?
I get the feeling just because
Everything I touch isn't dark enough
If this problem lies in me

I'm only a man with a candle to guide me
I'm taking a stand to escape what's inside me
A monster, a monster
I've turned into a monster
A monster, a monster
And it keeps getting stronger

I'm only a man with a candle to guide me
I'm taking a stand to escape what's inside me
A monster, a monster
I've turned into a monster
A monster, a monster
And it keeps getting stronger

Part 2: Once you finish annotating your song and answering the questions, pair up with another group that had the other song. Share your findings with the other group and answer the following questions together:

1. What similarities are there between the two songs? What differences did you find?
2. What are the songs saying about monsters?
3. Do you feel bad for either of the speakers?
4. Have you ever felt like a “monster?”

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- Pink – Personification
    - How does the speaker personify the "monster?" Does the speaker distance himself from the "monster," claim that he is one, or both?

"Monster" by Skillet

The secret side of me
I never let you see
I keep it caged
But I can't control it
So stay away from me
The beast is ugly
I feel the rage
And I just can't hold it

It's scratching on the walls
In the closet, in the halls
It comes awake
And I can't control it
Hiding under the bed
In my body, in my head
Why won't somebody come and save me from this?
Make it end!

I feel it deep within,
It's just beneath the skin
I must confess that I feel like a monster
I hate what I've become
The nightmare's just begun
I must confess that I feel like a monster
I, I feel like a monster
I, I feel like a monster

My secret side I keep
Hid under lock and key
I keep it caged
But I can't control it
'Cause if I let him out
He'll tear me up
And break me down
Why won't somebody come and save me from this?
Make it end!

I feel it deep within
It's just beneath the skin
I must confess that I feel like a monster
I hate what I've become
The nightmare's just begun
I must confess that I feel like a monster

I feel it deep within
It's just beneath the skin
I must confess that I feel like a monster
I, I feel like a monster
I, I feel like a monster

It's hiding in the dark
Its teeth are razor sharp
There's no escape for me
It wants my soul
It wants my heart

No one can hear me scream
Maybe it's just a dream
Or maybe it's inside of me
Stop this monster!

I feel it deep within
It's just beneath the skin
I must confess that I feel like a monster
I hate what I've become
The nightmare's just begun
I must confess that I feel like a monster

I feel it deep within
It's just beneath the skin
I must confess that I feel like a monster
I'm gonna lose control
Here's something radical
I must confess that I feel like a monster

I, I feel like a monster
I, I feel like a monster
I, I feel like a monster
I, I feel like a monster

Part 2: Once you finish annotating your song and answering the questions, pair up with another group that had the other song. Share your findings with the other group and answer the following questions together:

1. What similarities are there between the two songs? What differences did you find?
2. What are the songs saying about monsters?
3. Do you feel bad for either of the speakers?
4. Have you ever felt like a "monster?"

Lyric Analysis Activity #2

Follow along with the lyrics as we listen to the song as a class. Take notes as you listen, writing down any thoughts or questions you have. You will have five minutes after the song is finished to respond to the following questions:

1. John Lennon asks us to imagine a world without heaven, countries, religion, or possessions. How could each of these be helpful to some people? How could each of these be harmful to others?
2. What is the song saying about society as a whole?
3. How does the song convey a message of empathy? Find some specific examples in the lyrics.

"Imagine" by John Lennon (1971)

Genre: Soft rock/alternative

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace, you

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world, you

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will live as one

Follow along with the lyrics as we listen to the song as a class. Take notes as you listen, writing down any thoughts or questions you have. You will have ten minutes after the song is finished to respond to the following questions:

1. The Black Eyed Peas blame the CIA, gangs, the media, etc. for violence in the USA. Why do you think they did this? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your reasoning.
2. What is the song saying about society as a whole?
3. How does the song convey a message of empathy? Find some specific examples in the lyrics.

"Where Is The Love?" by The Black Eyed Peas (2003)

Genre: R+B/rap

What's wrong with the world, mama
People livin' like they ain't got no mamas
I think the whole world's addicted to the drama
Only attracted to the things that'll bring a trauma

Overseas, yeah, we tryin' to stop terrorism
But we still got terrorists here livin'
In the USA, the big CIA
The Bloods and The Crips and the KKK

But if you only have love for your own race
Then you only leave space to discriminate
And to discriminate only generates hate
And when you hate then you're bound to get irate, yeah

Madness is what you demonstrate
And that's exactly how anger works and operates
Man, you gotta have love, this'll set us straight
Take control of your mind and meditate
Let your soul gravitate to the love, y'all, y'all

People killin', people dyin'
Children hurt and you hear them cryin'
Can you practice what you preach?
And would you turn the other cheek?

Father, Father, Father help us
Send some guidance from above
'Cause people got me, got me questionin'
Where is the love (Love)

Where is the love (The love)
Where is the love (The love)
Where is the love, the love, the love

It just ain't the same, old ways have changed
New days are strange, is the world insane?
If love and peace is so strong
Why are there pieces of love that don't belong?

Nations droppin' bombs
Chemical gasses fillin' lungs of little ones
With ongoin' sufferin' as the youth die young
So ask yourself is the lovin' really gone

So I could ask myself really what is goin' wrong
In this world that we livin' in people keep on givin' in
Makin' wrong decisions, only visions of them dividends
Not respectin' each other, deny thy brother
A war is goin' on but the reason's undercover

The truth is kept secret, and swept under the rug
If you never know truth then you never know love
Where's the love, y'all, come on (I don't know)
Where's the truth, y'all, come on (I don't know)
Where's the love, y'all

People killin', people dyin'
Children hurt and you hear them cryin'
Can you practice what you preach?
Or would you turn the other cheek?

Father, Father, Father help us
Send some guidance from above
'Cause people got me, got me questionin'
Where is the love (Love)

Where is the love (The love)?
Where is the love (The love)?
Where is the love (The love)?
Where is the love (The love)?
Where is the love (The love)?
Where is the love (The love)?
Where is the love, the love, the love?

I feel the weight of the world on my shoulder
As I'm gettin' older, y'all, people gets colder
Most of us only care about money makin'
Selfishness got us followin' the wrong direction
Wrong information always shown by the media
Negative images is the main criteria
Infecting the young minds faster than bacteria
Kids wanna act like what they see in the cinema

Yo', whatever happened to the values of humanity
Whatever happened to the fairness and equality
Instead of spreading love we're spreading animosity
Lack of understanding, leading us away from unity

That's the reason why sometimes I'm feelin' under
That's the reason why sometimes I'm feelin' down
There's no wonder why sometimes I'm feelin' under
Gotta keep my faith alive 'til love is found
Now ask yourself

Where is the love?
Where is the love?
Where is the love?
Where is the love?

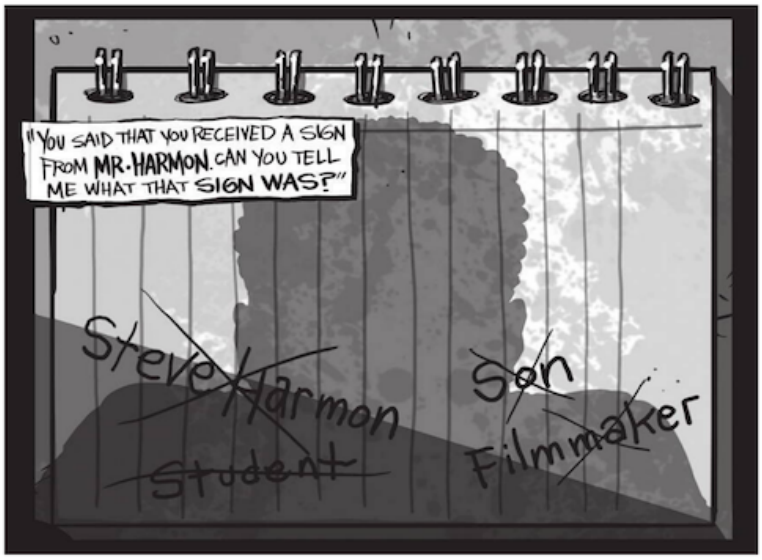
Father, Father, Father, help us
Send some guidance from above
'Cause people got me, got me questionin'
Where is the love?

Sing with me y'all
One world, one world (We only got)
One world, one world (That's all we got)
One world, one world
And something's wrong with it (Yeah)
Something's wrong with it (Yeah)
Something's wrong with the wo-wo-world, yeah
We only got
(One world, one world)
That's all we got
(One world, one world)

EKPHRASTIC POETRY

Directions: Look at the photo below from the graphic novel adaptation of *Monster*. Based on the picture and what we've read so far, write a poem to Steve using one of the following perspectives:

- Write to Steve from your own perspective. Do you think he's innocent and want to support him? Do you think he's guilty and should confess? Basically, what do you want Steve to know or tell you after reading your poem?
- Write to Steve from the perspective of another character in the novel. How has this character acted towards Steve so far? Do they think that Steve is guilty or innocent? Is there anything they would want to tell Steve that they haven't had the chance to say?



THE MONSTERS AMONG US
FINAL PROJECT

Throughout this unit, we have searched for answers to the following questions:

- What is a monster?
- Are monsters inherently bad?
- Can monsters have empathy? Should we show empathy towards them?

This is your chance to answer those questions! You will be assigned a group of 3-4 people to work with to create a PSA that answers the three questions above using information from *Monster* and *Undertale*. Your group's PSA needs to have some kind of **background music** and **transitional effects** and **each group member needs to play a role in creating it**. Each group member will be assigned one of the following roles:

Writer: writes the script for the PSA and implements any feedback from group members into the script. This member is also in charge of writing the Works Cited page.

Director: films the PSA and ensures that each actor knows what he/she is doing.

Editor: edits the PSA using video-editing software and adds effects, background music, etc.

**For a group of 3, the director and the editor can be the same person.*

Actor(s): performs for the PSA using the script and follows the director's instructions.

***The actor(s) should also help the writer, director, and editor when needed!*

****The writer, director, and editor can also act in the PSA.*

Your group's PSA must be **at least 3 minutes long, but no longer than 10 minutes**. Your group must include a **Works Cited page** with your sources for any outside information, images, or audio you use.

Grading Checklist

PSA includes information from both *Monster* and *Undertale*.	/15
PSA includes background music and transitional effects.	/10
Each group member played a role in creating the PSA.	/20
PSA is 3-10 minutes long.	/10
The group includes a properly formatted Works Cited page listing all of the sources used.	/20
Total:	**/75**